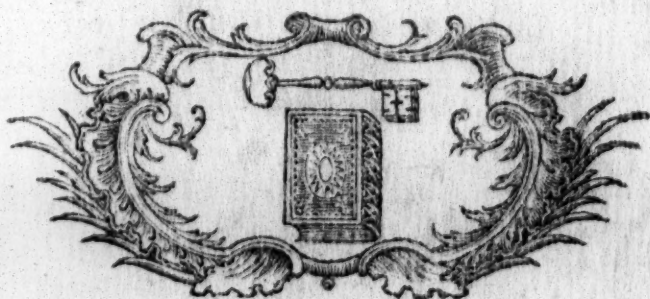


A
DISSWASIVE
FROM
P O P E R Y.

BEING A
LETTER TO A LADY,
To preserve Her from Apostacy from
the Communion of the
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.
The THIRD EDITION.



L O N D O N:
Printed for B. DOD, Bookseller to *The SOCIETY*
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,
at the *Bible and Key* in *Ave-Mary Lane*, near *Sta-*
tioners-Hall.

MDCCXLVI.

1578 / 3448



A
 DISSWASIVE
 FROM
 P O P E R Y.
 IN A
 LETTER TO A LADY, &c.

M A D A M,

AND are you indeed got into the only Catholick Church? And are you sure the men you have lately believed have not deceived you, as you fancy we have done? (For, though you may be so charitable as to think, that we have not intentionally cozened you; yet, since you cannot suppose us to be both in the right, you must necessarily conclude, that we have at least ignorantly abused and imposed upon you) And did you ever rightly consider, what a truly *Catholick Church* does mean? Men of sense and reason always believed, that a Church which holds the truly Catholick Faith, is a true and sound member of the Catholick Church; and dares malice itself say, that we do not hold the Apostles, the *Nicene*, and *Athanasius's* Creeds? The Church of *Rome* herself confesses, that these Creeds contain the truly Catholick Faith. And most certainly, when the *Nicene* Council was celebrated, and

in *Athanasius's* time, that Church was counted a sound member of the Catholick Church, that held that Catholick Faith, which is exprest in those Creeds: And do we not hold that Faith? Do we not stand up at it, to exprest our readiness to defend it? And what have we done, that we must not be counted a Catholick Church? Is it because we will not receive things which the Church of *Rome* hath since added to the Catholick Faith? Is it because we will not admit of the doctrines which that Church was first induced to believe, by the darkness and ignorance of the ages it lived in, and at last loth to part withal for fear they should be thought to have been so long in an error? Is it because we will not yield to things which we apprehend to be directly against the word of God, and destructive to that Catholick Faith the Christian world hath professed in all ages? Is it because we will not deprive the People of the Cup in the blessed Sacrament, which Christ intended as a mighty comfort to them? Is it because we will not believe the miracle of Transubstantiation, against four of our senses, and reason and scripture to boot? Is it because we will not suffer the worship of God, or that which is very like it, to be given to creatures, because of the very appearance of the evil of Idolatry, which we are commanded to shun, as much as Idolatry itself? Is it because we will not believe a Purgatory fire, which cleanseth little, but peoples purses of their money? Is it because we will not indulge the pride and arrogance of a man at *Rome*, who having first wheedled the Christian Princes out of their means and power, hath at last made that riches and power hereditary to his successors, under a pretence of a legacy from Christ? Is it because we will not believe, contrary to the Apostle's rule, that publick prayers, which are intended for the benefit and understanding of the multitude, must be said in a tongue unknown to the people? These must certainly be the reasons, why we cannot now pass with the Church of *Rome* for
members

members of the Catholick Church. That these things were not in the ancient Catholick Creeds, I hope you are convinced; for you have read them over, and found none of all these additions in them. And now I beg of you, in the name, and by the mercy of that Jesus in whom you believe, to judge, which is most likely to be the truly Catholick Church, ours, or theirs: Ours, that keeps to the truly ancient Catholick Faith; or theirs, that hath added things contrary to Scripture, and reason, and antiquity? And dare you continue in a Church, where your very communion with it is an approbation of their actions, which are directly contrary to the command of Christ? Can there be any thing more contrary to it, than their denying the Cup to the Laity? And when you receive the Sacrament but in one kind, contrary to Christ's command, do not you sin, and allow of the sin of that Church you are in? Is not your disobedience to Christ's command a sin? Or, can you imagine that you are more obliged to obey men, than Christ himself? You confess, you dare not live in any one sin: But how dare you live in this sin? You talk of the benefit of Confession and Absolution, when that very Priest to whom you confess, and who absolves you, lives in that sin you are guilty of, and neither absolves himself nor you from it; and you both continue in it, as if the blind had a mind to lead the blind. How dare you act thus against your reason and conscience? Are you not afraid, when you are going to confess, that God will laugh at your mock confession; since you neither confess that sin of living contrary to Christ's command about the Cup, nor are willing to part with it? Tell me not here, "that you drink the blood of Christ in eating his flesh;" if so, to what purpose doth the Priest consecrate wine for himself, if he drinks the blood of Christ in eating his flesh? But suppose the Bread were transubstantiated into the flesh and blood of Christ; you know that the not giving the Cup of Blessing to those who come to the

Lord's Supper, is contrary to Christ's institution, who distinctly consecrated the Cup, and gave that to his Disciples, who were representatives of all believers, as well as the Bread, and peremptorily commanded, *Drink ye all of this*; and I hope you do not call eating the consecrated Wafer, drinking the Wafer. But let us grant you your strange doctrine, that you do participate of the blood of Christ, in eating the consecrated Wafer: Who gave your Church Authority to alter Christ's institution? How can men dispense with an express law of God? Can they annul what God would have established, and continue to the world's end? And can you consent to so great a sacrilege? Doth not some horror seize on you, when you seriously think, that you approve of the Priest's sinning against so notorious a precept, and which he that runs may read? And, pray, Madam, wherein have you bettered yourself in going over to the *Roman* Church? Is this your proficiency in Religion, to forsake a Church, where you felt the lively Oracles of heaven coming warm upon your soul, and to join yourself to a Church, where you hear nothing but *Latin* prayers; and where the Priest, if he be not a good man, may as well curse you, as bless you, for any thing you understand of his language or devotion? Is this your proficiency in Religion, to leave a Church, where you are taught to worship God in spirit and in truth, and now to cleave to one, where they teach your prayers to go upon crutches of Crucifixes, Beads, and Images? Doth this look like that noble Religion which Christ taught the world, and whose design was to advance our rational souls by contemplation and meditation? O, Madam, you are too young to know the tricks of that Church you live in; they were more politick heads than yours is, that had the contriving it. Bold men, that had learnt not to blush at a lye; and then thought it their interest to hector the world into a belief of it. We, that can read books as well as they, and know the History of the Church

as well as they, can see through all these devices; which they perceiving, are angry with us for discovering the cheat. What was it, Madam, that you wanted in our Church to carry you to heaven? Did you want that which the Apostles and the primitive Christians never wanted? I mean, did you want more Articles of Faith than they subscribed and believed? If you wanted that, we confess we could not supply you; for we dare say nothing, and believe nothing with divine faith, but what *Moses* and the Prophets, and Christ and his Apostles, have taught us. If the Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation, then we teach all that. If the Church of *Rome* knows more Articles than Christ and his Apostles knew of, we will admire her insolence, but cannot satisfy her unreasonable desire. Did you want strictness of life in our Church? If all the commands of the Gospel can make you holy, we teach them all, and press them upon the people; and I presume, you do not aim to be holier than Christ and his Apostles would have you to be. Hath the Church of *Rome* another Gospel to teach you, than that we did instruct you in? If they have, much good may it do them. We are not fond of the Apostle's curse, *Should an angel from heaven bring another gospel unto you, let him be accursed.* I know your common plea, "That we Protestants cannot rightly interpret the Scripture, because we pretend to no infallibility." And do you blame us, for not being so impudent as the Church of *Rome*? There is no Protestant but would be glad there were an infallible interpreter of Scripture instituted by God, and recommended to mankind.

But where shall we find him? Who is it that God hath imparted this honour to? If you say the Fathers; you know not what you say; for the Fathers differ many times as much in interpretation of the Scripture, and are as contrary to one another, as any Men. If you say, the Church; that is a hard word: If you mean, Christ's universal Church, dis-

perfed all the world over, you must tell us where it is, that this Church hath left an infallible comment upon the Bible, and how it is possible for a man that will be resolved in any point, to go to all christian people in the world? If you say, the Church of *Rome*: You must first shew us her commission for this infallible interpretation. Secondly, you must prove she hath infallibly interpreted the Scriptures, and that those interpretations are infallible in all places. Thirdly, you must agree among yourselves, what part of your Church is infallible; whether the Pope, or an universal Council, or all christian People, or whether all these together. To say, that this infallibility lies in the Church, though you know not where, is to say, a needle lies in a bottle of hay, and he hath good luck that finds it. Nay, I think the Church of *Rome* hath been so modest, that notwithstanding all her pretences to infallibility, she never hath dared to obtrude a comment on the Bible as infallible; nor did I ever see any interpretation of the Bible made either by Pope or Council, which hath pretended to infallibility. If that Church be infallible, why do not their own Divines agree in interpretation of Scripture? If there be an infallible sense of the Scriptures in that Church, then the members of that Church are mad not to keep to that infallible sense, especially if they know where to fetch it; and they offer great affronts and injuries to their Church, in differing so much about interpretation of Scripture, when their Church can give them an infallible sense of it. For that Church having, as they pretend, the Holy Ghost to guide them in all things, I suppose that spirit assists her in the interpretation of one part of Scripture, as well as in another. If they say, it doth infallibly assist them in some places, and not in all, they destroy their own principle; and how shall a man be sure, that just in those points which are in dispute between us and them, they are infallible? Is the Spirit divided?

ed? or, is he not always the same? or, doth he not exert his power upon all occasions?

Madam, Who so blind as those that will not see? Who sees not that the pretence of infallibility is nothing but a juggle, a device to maintain a triple crown, and an engine to carry on a temporal authority? God indeed has promised, that his Church dispersed through the world, shall last to the world's end, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; but that promise differs very much from a promise of infallibility: And suppose it did infer an infallibility, how comes the particular Church of *Rome* to ingross it to herself, that is at the best but a member, and a very unsound one, of Christ's universal Church? It is one thing to be secured against being destroyed, and another to be free from all possibility of error. There is no doubt but a sober rational man, that prays earnestly for illumination, and reads the Scripture much, and considers the circumstances the holy Writers were in when they writ, and the occasions of their writing, and hath the advantage of learning, of languages, and history, may give a very true interpretation of Scriptures, such an interpretation as no man can rationally contradict, though he hath not recourse to a visible infallible guide, and though himself be not infallible. Things may be very certain, though they are not infallibly so; and he that can make things out so, that a prudent man cannot but give consent to them, and hath no just cause to doubt of their truth, may justly challenge belief from other men. But I will not insist upon this point, because I never heard you speak much of it. I will come a little closer to those reasons that moved you to go over to the Roman Church, whereof the principal was this; "That you were troubled in mind upon the account of your sins, and could get no satisfaction in our Church, though you sought it, like *Esau*, with tears; whereas you did no sooner confess
to

to a Roman Priest, and receive absolution, but you presently found unspeakable comfort."

And are you sure, *Madam*, that the peace and satisfaction you found in that Church was not delusion? You tremble at that word; but let us consider the nature of your peace. When you were in our Church, either you did truly repent of all your sins, or you did not. If you did not, most certainly you could have no solid peace; but if you did truly repent, as you say you did, what could hinder you from applying the promises made to penitent sinners, to yourself, which are the true grounds of comfort and satisfaction? It may be, you wanted a voice from heaven to confirm the promise of the Gospel; but have you since heard such a voice from heaven in the Church of *Rome*? I think not. If you truly repented in our Church, then certainly by the Word of God you were assured that your sins were pardoned; and if they were pardoned, why should you not comfort yourself with that pardon? That which makes you rejoice now, is because you believe your sins are pardoned; but if, when you were of our Church, you verily believed you truly repented, you could not but believe that your sins were pardoned; and consequently, you might have taken as much comfort as you do now. But the Minister of the Church of *England*, you say, gave me no absolution, which the Roman Priest did. Why, *Madam*, did any of our Ministers deny you absolution, when you could assure them that your repentance was sincere? Did you ever ask absolution, and were you refused? Nay, I appeal to your conscience, did not those Ministers you conversed withal assure you over and over, that you need not doubt of the pardon of your sins, so long as you did detest and abhor them, and watch, and strive, and pray against them, and were sincerely resolved to commit them no more, and did avoid the very occasions of evil? And what was this but absolution? which, however, you might have had performed with
greater

greater ceremony, if you had had a mind to it. It is no very hard matter to guess at the rise and progress of your peace and satisfaction in the Roman Church. All new things please, and, provided they have but a good face, allure our fancy ; and thus being pleased, it is very natural to defend them ; and having once defended them, our love to them advances, and by degrees we think our honour and credit is too far engaged to part with them. We see how children are quieted with new trifles (pardon the uncourtly comparison, I know not how to shun it) and the new object, they never saw before, surprises and charms them, makes them fix their eyes upon it, and cry if they cannot have it. In the nature of children we see our own ; and embracing new objects, which our sickly fancy is roving after, is but the scene of childrens longing for new play-things, changed : The novelty of the thing you were venturing upon, the new Church (new indeed, new to you, and new to God Almighty) which you were to join yourself to, the stool of Confession in the Church, and the Priest's new habit, and mortified face (which perhaps he owes more to his country than to his virtue) and affected gravity, and assuring you that their absolution had a wonderful virtue and efficacy ; all these together surprised you, and raised your expectation, and struck some kind of reverence into you. Your mind being thus possessed with the ideas of these new things you never tried before, and working upon your affections, and moving your will to confess to this man of wonders, you naturally fell into a fancy, that so much formality and ceremony, different from that you had been used to in our Church, had more charms in it than our plain and honest way ; and then laid the stress of your pardon upon the new Priest's absolution in that formal manner, wherewith your fancy being impregnated, it soon diffused a cheerful air in your countenance, and raised some gladness in your heart, because you had now done something more than ordinary, as an antidote

dote against your sin. And from hence arose your pretended peace and satisfaction, or delusion rather, because you laid the stress of your pardon upon the absolution of that Roman Priest, and not upon the sincerity of your repentance. If a Priest could forgive sins, whether men repent or no; then indeed you might have laid the stress of your pardon on that forgiveness of the Priest: but since, by your own confession, that absolution of the Priest signifies nothing, except you truly repent; for you to build your comfort on that absolution, when it should have been founded on your sincere repentance, cannot but be a false fire, and a counterfeit comfort: If you say, you did not fetch your peace from that absolution, but from the sincerity of your repentance, you catch yourself; for if your true repentance must be the foundation of it, then you might have taken the same comfort in our Church: If you still reply, you could not: you only mean you would not; for true repentance is true repentance in any Church: and if true repentance causes true comfort, it would have caused true comfort in our Church as well as in the Roman; and therefore there must be some cheat in this comfort.

The fancy you have since taken up, that the reason why you found comfort in the Church of *Rome*, upon your confession and absolution, and none in ours, must needs be, "because the Priests of that Church are true Priests, and ours are not," is as solid as your peace. If we have no true Priests in the Church of *England*, then most certainly the Church of *Rome* hath none. The Bishops, which in the beginning of our reformation did ordain Bishops, Priests, and Deacons among us, were ordained by Bishops of that Church; and if the character of Orders, by their own confession, be indelible, then it was not all the thunders and lightnings of excommunication at *Rome* could annul it. It is true your ghostly Father very confidently tells you (a quality incident to that sort of men) That our first Protestant Bishops never received Orders from
Bishops

Bishops of the Church of *Rome*: But one would admire what spirit doth possess these men, that they dare contradict all the publick authentick records we have of their being consecrated by Bishops of the Church of *Rome*; they might as well deny, that there were such Kings of *England* as *Henry VII.* and *Henry VIII.* (for we have nothing but publick records to shew for it) as deny, that the Bishops of the Reformation were ever consecrated by Bishops of the Roman persuasion. I am persuaded, that if any Papist should come into trouble about the title of an estate he hath, and did but know that the name of his ancestors, the manner of the conveyance, and his just title, were in some publick record or register; he would soon make use of it, alledge it as a sufficient proof, and thank God, for preserving a record which is so much for his advantage. I know not what can be a greater testimony in matters of fact, next to Revelation, than publick records and registers; and we dare venture our reputation upon it, that in the authentick registers of the respective Archbishops of *Canterbury*, where fear of being counted knaves and fools, for putting in things contrary to what was publickly known, may justly be supposed to have kept the publick notaries from asserting things notoriously false. In these registers, I say, it will be found, what succession our first Protestant Bishops had; how Archbishop *Parker*, the first Archbishop of *Canterbury* under Queen *Elizabeth* (to go no higher) was consecrated *December 17, 1559.* by four persons then actually Bishops, and who had formerly been ordained by Bishops of the Church of *Rome*; viz. *William Barlow*, in *Henry VIIIth's* days Bishop of *St David's*, under *Edward VIth* Bishop of *Bath* and *Wells*, under Queen *Mary* driven into exile, and returned under Queen *Elizabeth*; *John Story*, formerly Bishop of *Chichester*; *Miles Coverdale*, formerly Bishop of *Exeter*; and *John Hodgkins*, Bishop Suffragan of *Bedford*. Not to mention, that the Queen's
Letters

Letters Patents (in case any of the other should be sick, or forced to be absent) were directed to three Bishops more, who had formerly been Popish Bishops, and were turned Protestants; viz. *Anthony*, Bishop of *Landaff*, *John*, Bishop Suffragan of *Theford*, and *John Bale*, Bishop of *Offery*. But all this hath been so clearly demonstrated out of the publick records, first by Mr *Mason*, and since by Archbishop *Bramhal*, that he who writes of it can only transcribe out of them; and those who deny these records, must be men of strange foreheads, and of the greatest disingenuity. From these men, who had their Priesthood from the Church of *Rome*, our Priesthood is lineally derived: So that if our Priesthood be not valid, theirs cannot be; and if heresy doth not make the Episcopal Office void, nor disable a man from conferring Episcopal Orders on other men (as is evident from the second Council of *Nice*, with your Church an Oecumenical Council, which received Bishop *Anatolius*, though consecrated by *Dioscorus*, an heretical Bishop) if, I say, heresy doth not make the Episcopal Order void; then, suppose we were hereticks, our Priesthood, which is derived from Popish Bishops who turned Protestants, must be a true Priesthood still; and to this purpose I remember one of your Church said lately, *Once a Priest, for ever a Priest*.

Madam, If you desire to know the truth, be honest and sincere; you should act like a person that hath a mind to be satisfied, and search the publick records; and, till then, believe not every tale that is told you. The common plea of your Priests, That our records are sophisticated, and that we have put in what we please, argues only boldness and ignorance, when they can shew neither where, nor when, nor by whom, they were corrupted. Those who talk so, seem neither to understand what a publick solemn thing the Consecration of a Bishop is in *England*, nor to reflect, how difficult it is to fill a publick register

gister with falsities, as to matters of fact, when there are so many hundred men who know what is done at such a time, and view the records, and would most certainly speak of it, if they found a flaw in the relation. But if we should deal thus with the Church of *Rome*, question all their registers in the Vatican, and say, which we might do with far greater reason, that they are things packed and invented by men who have a mind to keep up a faction, I know what language we should meet withal. But will you boast, say you, of having derived your Orders from the Church of *Rome*, when you believe the Church of *Rome* to be an idolatrous Church? Madam, it is not the office of a Bishop of a Church we find fault withal, but the abuses of it. A Church that is guilty of very great corruption both in doctrine and manners, may have something that is good and allowable; and he that retains that, is not therefore guilty of her corruption, nor espouses her errors. Your Idolatry is one thing, and your Orders are another. The Jews did take many good things from the Heathens, and the Christians many commendable things from the Jews; but that neither made the Jews approve of the Heathenish worship, nor the Christians allow of the Jewish errors. We are not so disingenuous, as to make the breach between you and us wider than needs. So far as you go with Scripture and true Antiquity, we hold with you; where you contradict both, we cannot with a safe conscience bear you company. He that sees a pearl lie among a great deal of trash, if he take the pearl, is not therefore obliged to take the rubbish too; and if we have derived our Orders from you, that infers no necessity, that we must therefore consent to your notorious depravations of the ancient simplicity of the Gospel. The Christians heretofore that approved of the Baptism of the Donatists, did not therefore presently acknowledge the truth of their opinions; and he that should take a good custom from the
Turks,

Turks, cannot be therefore said to approve of all things that are in the *Alcoran*.

Madam, There is nothing more easy, than to cavil at the most prudent action in the world ; especially where people take a slight survey of things, and do not with seriousness and deliberation weigh the circumstances of the fact, and do not examine the inside, as well as the outside : And I must confess, upon the best examination of your actions and proceedings in this revolt to the Church of *Rome*, you never took the right way to be satisfied ; for, instead of pondering the arguments and motives of our departure from the Church of *Rome*, and of the reasons we alledge for our Church and doctrine, you made it your chief employment to read their books, and believed what they said to be oracles, for no other reason but because they talked with greater arrogance and confidence. If you say, that you could not judge of arguments, having never been bred a scholar : I would but ask you, How you durst change your religion then ? Did you change it without reason, and without ground ? And if you are not able to weigh the strength of arguments, how can you be sure that you are in the true Church at this time ? It is not talk, but arguments, that must demonstrate the truth of a religion ; And if you have not sufficiently weighed the arguments on both sides, it is a thousand to one but you may still be in the wrong way ; and you know not but you may be as much out now, as you were formerly. *Madam*, so great a thing as the change of your religion, upon which no less than eternity depends, might justly have challenged some years study, before you had resolved upon it. To do a thing of this nature upon so slight a survey, consider whether it doth not argue rashness and weakness, rather than piety and devotion. To leave a religion you have been bred and born in, a religion founded upon the word of God, and which you had liberty to examine by the Scripture, upon reading a popish

popish book or two, without diving to the bottom of the several controversies, without reflecting on the importance of the points in question, without studying a considerable time which religion comes nearest to Scripture, and which goes farthest off; is such an argument of impatience, that you only seem to have yielded to a dangerous temptation of the Devil. If the controversies between the Church of *Rome* and us are so intricate, as you say, and above your capacity to dive into them; you have then run over to that Church in the dark, and have as little reason to be satisfied with your proceedings, as you believe you have with our way of worship. You plead, that you have been sitting up whole nights, and weeping, and praying, that God would discover to you which is the true way to salvation; and from that time forward you found inclinations to go over to that Church: And is this a sufficient argument to justify your forwardness? When you had already begun to doubt, whether our Church were a true Church or no, because you found not that satisfaction in it your sickly desires wanted; it was then an easy matter to give ear to confident people, that magisterially and peremptorily assured you, that you would find satisfaction in their Church: And being fed with this hope, your inclinations to that Church grew stronger every day; as our mother *Eve*, the hopes of being like God, suggested to her by the Serpent, did egg and spur her on to eat of the fatal Tree.

We do not forbid people to pray to God, to lead or direct them into the right way (though sometimes it may be a perfect tempting of God, when people are in the right way, to desire God to discover to them, by a sign of their own choice, whether they are in it or no.) But then, if we pray to God to direct us, we must not neglect the means God hath appointed in order to our satisfaction, but must compare Scripture with Scripture, and books with books, and arguments with arguments; and search which

religion agrees most with the doctrines and practices of Christ and his Apostles; and, as the noble *Bereans* did, examine all the doctrines proposed to our belief, by the Scripture: And doing thus, and continuing this search, and these prayers together, no doubt, but God in his good time, will answer us, and direct us. But to pray to God to direct us, and not to use the means, in the use of which he hath promised to direct us, we do in a manner mock him, or desire him to work a miracle for us, or to vouchsafe us some extraordinary revelation, when we have *Moses* and the Prophets, and may hear them. And I am confident, had you joined this way with your prayers, examined the doctrines of the Church of *Rome*, and compared them with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, seen whether there be any thing like it in the Bible, and searched whether Christ and his Apostles ever taught such doctrines; and done all this, not slightly, but seriously and solidly, it is impossible you could ever have turned *Papist*: For, if our gospel be true, that religion can never be true; for there is nothing in the world can run more counter to the Gospel, than the doctrines of that Church, wherein we differ from them: And they had need put the Bible among prohibited books; for, should the people have liberty freely to peruse it, the Church of *Rome* would grow very thin and despicable.

I am sensible, your Priests find fault with our translation of the Bible, and cry out; "That there are great defects in it:" But when they talk so, they had need talk to women, not to men of learning, and who understand *Greek* and *Hebrew*, the languages in which the Word was originally written. The honesty of our translators appears sufficiently from hence; because if any sentence in the Bible be capable of a double sense, they express the one in the text, and the other in the margin; and where they do but in the least vary from the original, they either discover it by the *italick* character, or give you notice

notice of it in the margin; than which there can be nothing more honest. And let any Papist of you all shew us, wherein any thing in our Bible is ill translated out of malice or design, or expressed in words which the original will not bear.

If we examine translations by the original, then sure I am, there are few translations go farther from it than the vulgar *Latin*, or the *Rhemish* Testament; as were an easy matter to prove, if I intended more than a Letter.

You are much taken with their mortifications and penances, which, you say, we have not in our Church. But it is a sign, Madam, you did not rightly understand our religion: We are so far from condemning mortification and severity of life, that we do commend it, provided it be in order to subdue the body of sin, and to raise ourselves to a greater pitch of virtue; provided these severities be separated from all opinion of merit, and from an opinion of their being satisfactory and expiatory, and used only as helps, to work in us a perfect detestation of sin. And I will assure you, there are more in the Church of *England* who use severities in this humble holy way, than you are aware of.

We, indeed, do not ordinarily inflict them on all persons, because we know not their constitution, nor what their nature will bear, nor have we any command for it in the word of God: But these things we leave to every man's discretion, urging, that where sins require stronger remedies, there men ought to make use of them; and if their corruptions will not be gone by reasonings and arguments, that there they must inflict mulcts and penalties on themselves, to drive the unclean spirit out. Though I must say still, that religious severities and austerities are not certain signs of a true religion; for Heathens do use them as much as Christians, nay more than Christians; witness the *Brachmans* in the *Indies*, and the religious Pagans dispersed through

all the eastern parts: And if you conclude, "That therefore the Church of *Rome* must be in the right, because they inflict great penalties and severities, and make daily use of them;" I am afraid you only forbear turning Turk or Heathen, because you never saw their far greater severities in religion, than the Church of *Rome* can boast of. But still, "The Protestant Church hath not the real body and blood of Christ in the holy Sacrament, which the Church of *Rome* hath." And are you sure the Church of *Rome* hath it? I am persuaded, you did never taste it, nor see it, nor feel it, nor smell it; and how do you know it? What, because the Priests of that Church do tell you so? "No, say you, it is because Christ saith in express terms, *This is my body.*" And here, I confess, I stand amazed, that men with learning and reason about them, can sink into an opinion so contradictory, that, if all the consequences of it be considered, there is nothing in nature can be more absurd or irrational: And the Church of *Rome* had need oblige men to deny both their reason and senses, to believe a Transubstantiation. Here indeed, a faith strong enough to remove mountains is necessary; and though never any miracles were wrought, but were wrought on purpose to convince our senses; yet here we must believe one which neither sense nor reason can discover. When Christ gave the Sacrament to his Disciples, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 24. *He brake the bread, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you.* It is a wonderful thing, that the word *is*, in the first sense, *This is my body*, should have a literal sense, and in the very next sentence, pronounced with the same breath, cannot admit of a literal sense: For the word *is*, in the second sentence, must necessarily stand for *shall be*; because Christ's body, when He gave the bread, was not yet broken. If it will not admit of a literal sense in the very next sentence, because of the absurdity

furdity which would follow, that Christ was crucified, before he was crucified; why should we understand it in the first sentence literally, when the absurdity is far greater? Nay, that the word *is* should not be capable of being understood literally in the second essential part of the Sacrament, *This Cup is the new Testament*; and here, I say, it should import, and can import nothing else, but *signifies*, or, *is a Sign of the new Testament*; and yet must not be understood so in the first part of the Sacrament, is a thing we cannot comprehend: And when the Apostle, speaking of the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, 1 Cor. x. 16. The Cup of Blessing which we bless, *is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ?* and, The Bread which we break, *is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* Let the rigidest Papist, who hath not quite banished his reason, tell me, how he will make sense of the word *is* here, except he understand it figuratively: Most certainly it cannot be understood literally; for the Cup is not that Communion, but is a Sign of it. One would admire, how men can be so obstinate in a thing as clear as the sun: and you might as well conclude, that Christ is a door made of boards and nails, because the Scripture saith he *is* a Door; or that he is a real vine with green leaves and grapes about him, because the Scripture saith he *is* a Vine. But suppose the word *is* in these words, *This is my Body*, must be understood literally, How doth this make for Transubstantiation? Are the words *is*, and *is transubstantiated*, all one? A thing may be said to *be* a thousand ways, and yet without Transubstantiation: So that, if by the word *is* you understand Transubstantiation, you yourself must go from the literal sense, and assume a sense which is not expressed in that saying. All the Jews are so well versed in the sense of sacramental expressions, that by the word *is* they understand nothing but *signifies*, or *represents*; and therefore it is a horrid shame, that Christians,

Christians, merely for fear of being laughed at for departing from an absurd opinion, and losing the credit of a pretended infallibility, should make themselves ignorant in that, which the meanest Jew, even before the Gospel, understood without a teacher: For we may confidently believe, that no Jew, before Christ's time, was so sottish as to think, when it is said, *the Flesh is the Passover*, *Exod. xii. 11.* that the Flesh or Blood was really the Passover, but only a sign or representation of it, or a token to them, as *Moses* calls it, *ver. 13.*

I will not here put you in mind of the strange absurdities that must follow from this doctrine of Transubstantiation; *viz.* that Christ, when he did eat and drink in this Sacrament, must have eaten his own Flesh; and that the Apostles must have eaten his Body, while he was at the table with them, and before it was crucified, &c.

I could tell you, that this doctrine is against the great Article of our Faith, That Christ is ascended into Heaven, and there sitteth on the right Hand of God until the day of Judgment: — That it is against the nature of a real body, to be in a thousand places at once: — And that from hence it must follow, that the Body and Blood of Christ is capable of being devoured by vermin, capable of being poisoned; and, instead of giving life, may be so ordered that it shall kill and murder: Witness *Victor* the Third, Pope of *Rome*, and *Henry* the Seventh, Emperor, who were poisoned in the Sacrament; not to mention a thousand more of such monstrous consequences.

But since, *Madam*, you do insist so much upon that place of Scripture, *John vi. 53. Except you eat my Flesh, and drink my Blood, you have no life in you.* I will but briefly shew you, how ill a logician you are, to conclude that this is spoke of the Sacrament, or to conclude, that these words infer a corporal manducation of Christ's real Body and Blood:

Blood: If they be meant of the Eucharist, it will necessarily follow, that Christ obliged the Jews, and his hearers, to come to the Sacrament at the time he spake these words; for he speaks of their present eating and drinking (*Except ye eat, &c.*) But this he could not possibly do: for the Sacrament of his Body and Blood was not instituted till at least a whole twelvemonth after; nor did any of his Disciples, at that time, dream of any such thing, as his dying, and being crucified; nor doth Christ speak the least word of it in the whole chapter; which he must necessarily have done, if he had intended the Sacrament by it, which is altogether founded in his Crucifixion. For this Sermon of Christ, concerning eating and drinking his Flesh and Blood, was delivered just about the Feast of the Passover, *ver. 4.* After which Feast, as it is said, *John vii. 1, 2.* the Jews celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles; and after this they kept another Feast of the Passover, the last which Christ was at, which was no less than a twelvemonth after, *John xi. 55. xii. 21.* So that the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood not being instituted before the last Passover, as all the Evangelists agree, it was not possible, that either the believing Jews, or the Apostles, could understand it of the Sacrament (and I suppose Christ intended to be understood) because there was no such thing as yet instituted. Besides, it is impossible that it should be understood of the sacramental eating and drinking of the Body and Blood of Christ; for without this eating and drinking there is no Salvation to be had, as is said, *John vi. 53, 54.* And if it were to be understood of the Eucharist, we must exclude all Christians from Salvation, that are not in a capacity, nor in a possibility, of receiving it; which I am sure, your own Church will not do.

And that these words of Christ cannot possibly be understood of a corporal eating Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood, but must be understood of a
spiritual

piritual eating and drinking; that is, believing in him, and obeying him, and hoping for pardon through his death, which is the spiritual food of the soul, is evident from the 54th and 56th verses, where every one who eats of his flesh, and drinks of his blood, is said to have actually eternal life in him, and Christ dwelling in him, and he dwelling in Christ: That is, Christ loves him with a love of complacency; he is a child of God, and beloved of Him, and an heir of heaven. But since wicked men come to the sacrament, not only in our Church, but even in the Church of *Rome*; it would follow, if a corporal eating were understood, that wicked men, eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood, have eternal life in them, and that Christ dwells in them, and that they are true children of God, and heirs of heaven; contrary to the unanimous consent of the holy Prophets and Apostles, who call wicked men children of the devil, and blinded by the devil, the god of the world, and heirs of damnation. And indeed it is strange, that people should contend for this corporal and sensual eating of Christ's flesh, and drinking his blood, when Christ himself saith, *ver.* 63. "That the flesh profiteth nothing, and that this eating and drinking must be understood spiritually;" *i. e.* of spiritual eating and drinking, which is believing, as is said *ver.* 64.

You see, Madam, what it is not to make use of your own reason, but to enslave it to the faith of a Church, which loves to act in the dark, and would have her children *Colliers*, and believe what the Church believes, and know little more than the great mystery of an *Ave Maria*, or a *Rosary*.

Time was, when you were pleased to tell our Ministers, that though you were gone over to the Church of *Rome*, yet you had liberty not to pray to Saints, nor to fall down before Images; for that was not thought necessary by the Church of *Rome*, which only recommended praying to Saints, and veneration

neration of Relicks and Images, as a thing useful, and which men have received much benefit by. And indeed, I remember I was told, you thought, that praying to Saints was a kind of idolatry; and therefore, was glad they would excuse you from that worship: But since, I hear, that you are grown as devout a worshiper of Saints, and peculiarly of the Virgin *Mary*, and do prostrate yourself before them, as much as the most tractable Papist in the world. I confess, I did smell a rat at first, when your Priests assured you, that invocation of Saints was not a thing commanded, but recommended as useful; and was then confident, that before a year came to an end, for all these soft expressions, and dispensations with your omission of this worship, they would persuade you to that worship, which then you thought unlawful. My prophesy is come to pass; and the pill, which seemed very bitter at first, is swallowed, and become sweeter than honey, and looked upon as an excellent medicine. And this, I must needs say, is more than you could have in our Church. But this is our comfort, that the more ingenuous men of the Church of *Rome* confess, “ That this praying to Saints or Angels was not heard of, or used in the christian Church, for the first three hundred years after Christ: And if the christian Church, for the first three hundred years, did not think it useful at all, it is a strange degeneration from their principles, to press it now as useful. Certainly, if God had thought this invocation so useful, as your Church pretends it is, He would not have so peremptorily commanded, *Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*, Psal. l. 15. And it is probable, the Apostles, in prescribing so many useful things of far less concern, would not have left us in the dark as to the mighty usefulness of this invocation; especially, when they had occasion to mention the spirits of men made perfect, and did so often converse with Angels. The

Angel, *Rev.* xxii. 8, 9. thought it a very useless thing, and would not admit of so much as a religious prostration of the Evangelist before him, because it looked like sacrilege, and robbing God of his due.

But since your Church, in this adoration, takes pattern so much from the courts of Princes, give me leave to suggest to you, how you think a sovereign Prince would take it, if a subject should give any of his servants the title of Majesty, or any other title which properly belongs to him. There are few titles that God hath, and inspired men have given to Him, but you give them to the blessed Virgin; and though, when you are charged with it, you fall to distinctions, and turn and wind yourselves to get out, yet that shews only a bad cause, because it requires so much artifice and cunning to defend it. But, alas, it must be children that are persuaded and coaxed to believe, that the Church of *Rome* only counts it useful, not necessary; when it is well known, that the generality of that communion pray to Saints more than to God (which, in the Scripture phrase, is, honouring the creature more than the Creator) and they never leave that person that goes over to them, till they have brought him to the worship of Saints and Angels.

It is pretty to hear these men talk, that it is only recommended as useful, when the Bishops and preachers of that Church are enjoined, and take their oath upon it, to commend this invocation to the people, as profitable; and the people are obliged to hearken to their Priests in all things: So that, though a man at first may think this invocation not necessary upon the account of its being only useful; yet, from that other obligation he hath to obey the Priest in all spiritual things, it becomes necessary. But from this scruple we are delivered, Madam, by the Confession of Faith, which the Roman Catechism doth prescribe: For there it is, "That it is
not

not only useful, but that we ought to pray unto Saints :” And indeed, should any Man live in that communion, and omit it, he would soon be looked upon as profane, and but a half convert to their Church; they would soon let him know their displeasure, and either fright or flatter him into conformity.

And is this the worship, *Madam*, which Christ and his Apostles have enjoined the world? Are not you afraid of doing things, that do so nearly border upon robbing God of his honour and glory? Idolatry is a frightful word, and you do not love to hear it; and therefore I will trouble you with it as little as I can. But when God hath commanded you to come to him directly, without mentioning the intercession of Saints and Angels, How dares your Church of her own head, bring in a worship so dangerous? Who should prescribe the way how God is to be worshipped, but God himself? And if God requires you to address yourself to Him without any mediator but Christ Jesus, Have not you just reason to be afraid, that God will reject your prayers, which are addressed to Saints, as mediators, contrary to his order and injunction? What Kings suffer here on earth, in letting their subjects address themselves by their servants to them, can be no example here: For God, as he intends not to regulate his court by the courts of Princes; so we know it is against his order, to go to his servants, when we are commanded to come directly to him; and it is such a voluntary humility as deprives us of our reward, as the Apostle expressly tells us, *Col. ii. 18.* God knew well enough, if men addressed themselves to his servants, to have access to him, something of the worship due to him would stick by the way, and rest upon his servants, to his dishonour and disparagement; and therefore he mentioned nothing of this mediate address. It is true, we desire our neighbours here on earth to pray for us; but for that we

have a command: For the invocation of Saints departed we have none. "And in vain do they worship me (saith God) teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," *Matth. xv. 9.* But besides, when you desire your living neighbours to pray for you, I hope you do not fall down upon your knees to them, nor use the same zeal and devotion to them, as you do to God; nor for whole hours together, as you do to Saints departed. But why will you blind yourself in a thing which your own practice contradicts you in? You know you do not only pray to Saints departed to pray for you, but you do many times, without making any mention of their prayers for you, beg of them, with the same reverence and prostrations you use to God, to deliver you from all evil; and consequently, you beg the same blessings of them, you beg of God. And it is but a weak excuse to say, "That you intend by those Prayers nothing else, but that by their intercession they may get those blessings for you; for you go contrary to the nature of things: And whereas words ordinarily are interpreters of the mind, you make your minds interpreters of your words and actions; which is a strange evasion: And if such a thing be intended, why do you lay a snare before the common sort people; who, being ordered to pray to Saints for such and such blessings, know nothing to the contrary, but that they are able to dispense those blessings to them? and thus commit idolatry by your wilful connivance, whose blood will certainly be required at your Churchmens hands one day? Examine but your prayers to the Virgin *Mary* in your own Manuals; when you have prayed to her, and begged of her all you can pray to God for, you add a word or two of her intercession; which in good truth is nothing but a blind, that you may not be said to commit downright idolatry. You know those prayers to the Virgin *Mary*, which in the *Latin*, and I think in the *English* Manual too, are ordered

to

to be said to the Virgin, morning and evening.

The one,

O my Lady, Holy Mary, I commend myself, my soul and body, to thy blessed care and singular custody, and to the bosom of thy mercy, this day, and every day, and in the hour of my going out of the world. All my hope, and all my comfort, all my afflictions and miseries, my life, my end, I commit unto thee (Speak seriously, What can you say more to God?) that by thy most holy intercession, and by thy merits, all my words and actions may be directed and disposed according to thine and thy Son's will. Amen.

Where it is worth noting, that first, you do put as much trust in the Virgin, as you do in God; and then afterwards, to make these harsh expressions softer, you desire her to intercede for you, that your works may be directed according to Christ's will, nay and her own, as if she were a law-giver too. Then follows, *Maria, Mater Graciæ, &c.* O Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of mercy, protect us from the enemy, and receive us in the hour of death; which St Stephen thought was fitter to be said to Christ, when he cried, *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.* Then follows the evening prayer to the Virgin Mary, O Mary, Mother of God, and gracious Virgin, the true comforter of all distressed creatures that call upon thee (This epithet, by the way, the Scripture gives to the Holy Ghost) by that great joy whereby thou wast comforted, when thou didst know that Jesus Christ was risen the third day from the dead impassible, be thou the comforter of my soul; and by the same, who is thine and God's only Son, in the last day, when with body and soul I shall rise again, and give an account of all my actions, do thou vouchsafe to help me, that I may escape the sentence of perpetual damnation, by thee, pious Mother and Virgin, and may come happily with all the elect of God, to eternal joys. Amen. Then follows, Un-

der thy protection we flee, holy mother of God; despise not our prayer in our necessities, but deliver us from all dangers always, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Not to mention any more Prayers of this nature, whereof there are a vast number.

If God be a God jealous of his Glory, How can he like and approve of such doings? It is true, the Honour done to his Servants is done to him; but then it must be such Honour as they are capable to receive: So to honour them, as to give them the epithets and titles which the Scripture gives to none but God; so to honour them, as to use in your Prayers to them, the same outward prostrations that you use to God, when you pray to him; so to honour them, as to spend more time in your addresses to them, than you do in your Supplications to God, as is evident from your Rosary; so to honour them, as to say more Prayers to them than to Christ; so to honour them, as to join their merits with Christ's merits: This is an Honour which, I believe, will oblige God to say one day, *Who hath required these things at your hands?* And how unlike the Worship of the true God is that veneration you express to the Images and Pictures of Saints, and to the Relicks? how unlike that plain and simple Worship which the Gospel enjoins? One would think it should a little startle you, to see that your Church is afraid to let the Second Commandment be known to the People: You know they leave it out in their Primers and Catechisms; or if they mention it, they do so mince it, that one sees plainly they are afraid the people should see the contrariety of their worship to the express word of God. In the beginning of the Reformation, the very sight of this Commandment made people run away from the Church of Rome as much as any thing. Indeed, to consider the general terms God uses there, *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven Image, &c.* Thou shalt not only not worship them, but not so much as fall down before them; would make a person, that is
not

not taken more with the golden Legends than with Scripture, afraid of Prostrations before Images, upon the account of Devotion. It is not all your plea, "that you do not terminate your Worship on the Image, but on the Person represented by the Image," that will excuse you at the great Tribunal: For, not to mention, that in the same manner the Heathens used to defend their grossest Idolatry, and that you are forced to borrow their very arguments; your own authors do confess, "that the common people are apt to pay Adoration, and do pay Adoration, to the Images themselves:" And why will you lay such a stumbling-block before the people?

Much might be said of the Adoration you pay to the consecrated Host: You confess, "that the worship you give to it is the same Worship you give to God. What if that Wafer should not be turned into the Body and Blood of Christ? What if it should remain as very a Wafer as it was before Consecration? What if it should not be God, as you have all the demonstrations that sense and reason can give you, that it is not changed into another substance? What monstrous Idolatry would this be?" "Ay, but we believe it to be God." Why, *Madam*, doth your belief, that such a thing is God, or Christ, excuse you from Idolatry? Should you believe a stone to be God, and adore it, Might not you be justly charged with Idolatry? You look upon the Heathens as Idolaters, because they adore the Sun: "Ay, but they believe that Sun to be God;" And how then, according to your plea, can they be Idolaters? If there be such a Transubstantiation in the Sacrament, as you fancy, and an Adoration of the Host so very necessary; What is the reason the Apostles of our Lord, who saw Christ before their eyes (only could not believe that there were two Christs, one sitting at the table, the other reached out to them?) What is the reason, I say, that they sate still, and paid no Adoration to the Bread, which, according to you, was transubstantiated

tiated into Christ? If *they* did not adore it, What a presumption is it in *you* to give the highest Worship to the consecrated Bread, upon pretence that *that* Bread is God, under the accidents of Bread? But of this I have said enough before; and could you but find time to read what our Authors have written upon this subject, it could be nothing but hardness of heart, and resolution to be blind, could keep you in a Church, that fills your head with doctrines contrary to the nature of a Sacrament; contrary to all that *Moses* and the Prophets, nay, and all sound Philosophers, have said.

I will not say any thing here of your strange unbloody Sacrifice of the Mass; a thing unheard of in the purer ages of Christianity, and which the Scripture is so great a stranger to, that one would wonder how mankind came to light upon the notion: Nor of your Doctrine of Merits; because I find your Priests have two strings to their bow, and tell the people one thing, and their adversaries, when they dispute with them, another; affirm and deny it as they see occasion, and necessity requires. Only one thing I must needs take notice of before I take my leave; and that is, the gigantick argument that some of your gentlemen boast of, and which strikes all Protestants dead at the first hearing of it: "If there be any thing true, this must be true, That there is a God: if there be a God, there must be a true Religion; if there be a true Religion, there must be a true Revealed Religion; if there be a true Revealed Religion, the Christian Religion must be that true Revealed Religion; and if the Christian Religion be true, then the Religion of the Church of *Rome* must be true: For, the argument that proves the Christian Religion to be true, proves the Religion of the Church of *Rome* to be true; which is this: Either the Christian Religion was propagated without Miracles, or by Miracles; if by Miracles, then it must be Divine; if without Miracles, then it is the greatest Miracle, that a Religion so contrary to flesh
and

and blood should prevail with sensual men. The same, say they, is true of the Religion of the Church of *Rome*: For, if it be propagated by Miracles, it must be Divine; if without Miracles, it must be so much the more, because it prescribes things contrary to flesh and blood, as Penances, Austerities, &c. and thousands of people do embrace it." I will not make myself merry here in a thing so serious; else I could have told you, that I have heard of an argument, when I was at school, somewhat like this: *He that drinks well, sleeps well; he that sleeps well, commits no sin; he that commits no sin, will be saved*: Therefore he that drinks well, will be saved. But I forbear. And as to the aforesaid argument, whereby one of your Priests, who hath printed it, thinks to end all controversies, I will say no more but this. First, That as there is no Christian but must readily confess, That the Miracles Christ and his Apostles wrought, were a confirmation of the Divinity of their Doctrine; so there is no man of any brains can admit of the other part of the dilemma as universally true, That a Religion that goes against flesh and blood, if propagated without Miracles, must therefore be necessarily Divine. Secondly, That so far as the Religion of the Church of *Rome* agrees with the truly Christian Religion, so far it is undoubtedly true; and it will naturally follow, that if the Christian Religion be true, the Religion of the Church of *Rome*, so far as it agrees with the Christian Religion, must needs be true; and the same may be said of the Protestant Religion: But that the Roman Religion must therefore be true, where it goes away and differs from the truly Christian Religion, revealed to us in the Gospel, is a consequence which none but children can approve of. Thirdly, With this argument a man might prove the Divinity of almost any Religion in the world. He that is no stranger to history, must needs know what severities, what austerities of life, the *Brachmans*, or the heathen Friars in the *Indies*, do both prescribe and

and practise, and what proselytes they make, and how full the kingdom of the Great Mogul is of them; how some wallow in ashes day and night; how others go charged with heavy iron chains all their days; how others stand upright upon their legs for whole weeks together, &c. How in *Japan*, and other places of the *Indies*, the Priests persuade the people to fast themselves to death, to go long pilgrimages, to give all they have to the Priests, to throw themselves down from steep rocks, and break their necks, and all to arrive the sooner to the happiness of another world, &c. I think there cannot be things more contrary to flesh and blood than these; and yet we see these doctrines are propagated daily without any force of arms, only by example and persuasion, to be sure without any Miracle: but, I hope, that doth not prove their Religion to be Divine. It is a dictate of the light of Nature, That the way to Heaven is straight; and therefore people that are religiously inclined, are easily won over to those men, whom they see exercise such severities upon themselves.

To conclude, *Madam*: When all is done, what the true Church is, must be tried by the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles. We see, that even in the Apostles days corruption crept into the Church; witness the Churches of *Corinth*, *Galatia*, *Colosse*, &c. and the simplicity of the Gospel began even then to be perverted, and mingled with idle and foolish opinions and practices; and therefore we must needs think; that after the Apostles decease the Church of Christ was subject to the same fate: So that if there be any standard or touchstone left, whereby the truth and sincerity of a Church can be tried (and we must needs think so well of God's Providence, that he would not leave his Church without some Rule to rectify her errors by, in case she should be infected with any) it must be the primitive Institution of the Christian Religion; and that Church, as I said before, which teaches

teaches things that approach nearest to that primitive Institution, must be the true Church.

And, *Madam*, do but once more, for your Soul's sake, and for your Salvation's sake, compare the doctrines and practices of the Church of *Rome* with the doctrines and practices of the Gospel, the Fountain of Christianity; and try, whether you can find there the doctrines of *Communion under one kind*, of *publick Prayers in a tongue unknown to the people*, of *Purgatory*, of *the Mass*, of *Transubstantiation*, of *the Church of Rome's Supremacy and Infallibility*, of *worshipping and adoring the Virgin Mary*, and *praying to Saints*, of *veneration of Relicks and Images*, of *adoration of the Host*, &c. Do not force any places of Scripture; and try, whether you can make sense of any of these doctrines by Scripture: View the stream of the Gospel, and search whether there be any thing like these doctrines in it. Why will you make your reason a slave to your Priest's magisterial sentences? How can you answer it to God, that you did not improve your reason more? What have you your reason for, but to judge what is agreeable to the Word of God, and what is not? Is not this acting like a creature void of reason, to be guided altogether by what a few blind guides say to you, without enquiring at *the Law and Testimony*, whether things are so as they say, or no? Wonderful stupidity! I stand amazed at it. It is not all the seeming Holiness of those Priests you converse withal, that makes the Church you are in a true Church. There is no sect in the world, but when they are under a cloud, necessity, and the discouragement they are under, and their desire to make proselytes, make them outwardly religious. There may be, and no doubt are, zealous and outwardly pious men in all Religions in the world; but that doth not make every Religion true and divine. An outward shew of Piety is the only way of propagating any Religion. The Devil himself could not propagate Heathenism and Idolatry, but by the pretended

pretended zeal, and piety, and abstinence, and mortification of some impostor or other; as of *Apollonius Tyanaeus*, for example; who yet, by the confession of the whole Christian world, was no better than a wizard and a conjurer. I make no application to any particular Priest in the Church of *Rome*: I do not deny but men may be in great errors, and be very zealous for their errors, and seemingly very pious in their zeal; and when their errors are not very wilful, and destroy not the true Worship of God, for ought I know, they may find Mercy in the day of our Lord. I grant, there is a great shew of outward Piety in the Church of *Rome*, very dazling, and very moving: but the great danger lies here; That the Worship they give to God with one hand, they strike and pull down with the other. I know too well the practice of their Churches; and a Heathen, that should come into their Temples beyond sea, would verily believe that they worshipped a multiplicity of gods as well as he, whatever their pretensions may be to the contrary. It is not what people say, so much as what they do, that God takes notice of; and though you should ten thousand times protest, That you worship and adore God alone; yet, while God sees you adore the Virgin *Mary* with as great zeal and reverence as you do him, pray to her oftener than you do to him, make as many bows to her, and other Saints, as you do to him, and other things of that nature; How can he believe you? Religion is a thing that will not bear jests and hypocrisy: God will not be put off with contradictions between speeches and practices.

Madam, I do from my heart pity you; and as it might be the weakness of your judgment that might lead you into this erroneous Church, so I beseech you for Christ's sake, to return to the Church you have rashly left, where you cannot run a hazard, if you will but follow the plain Doctrines of the Gospel; besides which we preach nothing, and enjoin nothing as necessary

cessary to Salvation. Should these intreaties and be-
 seachings be alledged against you in the last day, as
 things which you have, contrary to reason, refused
 and slighted, How dreadful would your condition be?
 I have discharged my duty, and given you a warning:
 I would not have your guilt lie at my door; and
 therefore have let you know my real thoughts and
 sentiments concerning your condition, and the Church
 you are in. The great God of Heaven open your
 eyes, that you may see and fear.

Time was, when you would have believed us as
 much as you do now the Priests of the Church of
Rome. It is strange, that now they should speak no-
 thing but truths, and we nothing but falshood. Do
 you think we do not understand the Scriptures, and
 Fathers, and Antiquity, as well as they? And can we
 all be so besotted with interest and passion, that none
 of us should yield to the dictates of their Church, if
 we could prevail with our sense and reason to believe
 that the things wherein they differ from us were
 agreeable to the Gospel? Sure we have a great many
 men among us who are great lovers of peace, and would
 be glad that the whole Christian world were agreed;
 and would these men stand out against that union, if
 it could be done with a safe conscience? Certainly we
 have men as learned among us as ever the sun did
 shine upon; nay, the Church of *Rome* hath at this
 day few men to equal ours for learning and knowledge.
 And would all our learned men be so stubborn and
 obstinate, as not to agree with the Church of *Rome*,
 if they did not see plainly, that *there is death in that*
pot; and that the errors in that Church cannot be
 subscribed to without hazarding the welfare of their
 Souls? I will but use own argument, when you
 went over to the Church of *Rome*, and were per-
 suaded by the earnestness of her Priests to yield to
 their reasonings; "What pleasure can we take in
 promoting your damnation? What can be our interest
 in

in deceiving you?" You used that argument on their side; Why will you not use it on our side? Judge you, whether we, who have the Gospel on our side for what we teach, are not in a safer way than that Church, which, for all the new doctrines they have added to the old Creeds, are forced to run to the broken cisterns of Tradition, and I know not what Fathers, whose writings they know not whether they be genuine or no. As you are now, you live in wilful opposition to the Doctrine and Precepts of the Gospel; and, O remember what St Paul doth say, 2 *Theff.* i. 7, 8. *That the Lord Jesus will ere long come down from Heaven with all his holy Angels, to take vengeance on those who have disobeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Once more therefore I charge you, before Almighty God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, to repent of your errors, and to return to the bosom of that Church, in which you received your life and being, and the Principles of Religion and Christianity. But if all this seem to you no more than bugbears, I have delivered my own Soul, and should be sorry that this discourse should stand as a witness against you in the last day, which, God knows, was only intended as a motive to draw you back to that Fold from which you have wandered and gone astray. I am,

M A D A M,

Your faithful Friend to serve you,

Feb. 17,
1677.

A. H.

POSTSCRIPT.

M A D A M,

AS in the publishing of this Letter I had no other design, but to prevent the fall of others into the like danger; so I have particularly insisted on those motives, which have of late tempted some persons to go over to the Roman Church: And though I have represented these motives as yours, yet in this I have been so far from doing any thing against the laws of private discourse, or friendship, or acquaintance, that I have only touched upon the common stumbling-blocks, which make unwary people join themselves to that Church; blocks which might easily be removed, if men and women would but give themselves leave to think, and would prefer the solid dictates of their reason before the suggestions of their soft and sickly passions.

One thing I had almost forgot, and which indeed is the great bugbear, whereby your Churchmen fright their people from running over to us; and that is, “That our Church began but about an hundred and fifty years ago; that *Luther* and *Zuinglius* were the Authors of it; and that we had no Church before.” Pitiful shifts indeed, to keep people from seeing the sun at noon. Suppose our religion did but begin then: Why, must people be always in an error? Must they never reform, when they have done amiss? If there were monstrous errors in the Church of *Rome*, which the aforesaid persons saw would be the death of christianity, and which they could not subscribe to without debauching their reason, or wronging both their
own,

own, and other mens consciences ; was it not rational, they should protest against such things, to give their fellow christians warning ? When the house is on fire, would you have no body wake to alarm the neighbours to look to themselves ? Did they see so many thousand men ready to be drowned, and would you have had them hold their tongues, and barbarously suffered them all to be drowned ? Did they see the christian religion like to be swallowed up by darkness and ignorance, and was it not time to rouse the slumbering world ?

But however, that these men were the first broachers of our religion, is notoriously false : First, because long before them, there were men who lived in the external communion of the Church of *Rome*, but disliked the errors, as they crept in, and grew dangerous : and though they were over-awed and silenced many times by the higher powers of the *Roman* court ; yet they both detested those corruptions, and, as they had opportunity, protested against them (as were an easy matter to prove, from age to age, if it had not been done already over and over by Divines of our Church) So that though these men, who lived long before *Luther*, and whom God still raised to vindicate his truth, as it grew more and more polluted, were not called *Protestants* by the people, yet in effect they were so ; and consequently there were *Protestants* many years before *Luther* and *Zuinglius* : And though they were not suffered by the ignorant, and imperious ecclesiastic powers, to meet and assemble themselves in public ; yet they made a Church, as much as the followers of holy *Athanasius* did, when the world was turned *Arian* ; as much as *Elijah*, and those seven thousand the Oracle mentioned, made a Church, when the whole country was overrun with idolaters. These seven thousand, we read, lay hid, and durst not appear in publick, being oppressed by the idolatrous powers who sat at the stern, and thought there was no good fishing but in troubled waters. And indeed,

deed, in this manner our Church was dispersed long before *Luther*, among the greater multitude of the followers of the corrupted Roman Church, as a handful of wheat lies scattered in a bushel of chaff: and though it did not appear in pomp and grandeur; yet, that external splendor is not essential to the truth of a Church, your own men may be convinced, by the aforementioned examples.

Secondly, If your champions speak strictly of the Religion which we profess in the Church of *England*, they are under a mistake, when they make *Luther* or *Zuinglius* the Authors of it; for our Reformation began some time after, and was both begun and carried on with great deliberation and consideration, under *Edward* the Sixth, by publick Authority; whose proper province it is, to take notice of what is amiss in a Kingdom or Commonwealth, whether it be in Church or State, and to reform and mend it. It is no great matter *when* a Reformation begins, so the Reformation be but just; and if such a Reformation had been begun but yesterday, that would not have made it unlawful: and that our Reformation was just and necessary, hath been proved by our Divines beyond all reasonable contradiction: And how could it but be just, when the decrees of the Church of *Rome* controlled the Word of the living God, and vied with the Oracles of the Gospel? How and when the several errors crept into that Church, is not material to determine; it is enough we found them there; and it was God's mercy, not to give all the learned men of that age over to believe a lye. But it is pretty to hear your Churchmen talk of the novelty of our Religion, when it is evident to all the understanding world, that our first Reformers began no new Religion, but desired only to keep to the old. All their endeavour was to keep to the Religion of the Bible, and to cut off all superfluities, and things prejudicial to salvation; and was there any hurt in that? They saw, that many things then in use in the Church of

D

Rome

Rome were diametrically opposite to the doctrines and practices of the primitive Church, and they justly thought it their duty to reduce the Church to the ancient pattern: The prouder Clergy of the Roman Church would not yield to it, but would have all their new fangles, and all their additions to the ancient Symbols, received as articles of faith, though all perished, and the coat of Christ were rent in a thousand pieces; the more humble and more moderate of the Clergy saw the pride and insolence of the other, and trembled; and thus we and they parted: We kept to the old religion, and your men chose the new; and much good may it do you: And pray judge by this, which is the schismatick Church, we, or they; we, who would have healed *Israel*, or they who would not be healed. So that it is not our religion which began so lately as an hundred and fifty years ago, about *Luther's* time, but it is yours that commenced then; for you then embraced the new additions to the ancient catholick creeds with greater greediness, and were resolved to maintain that by bravadoes, which you were not able to defend with arguments.

It is a very ordinary thing for people, who once incline to the communion of the Roman Church, to demand of us, before they go over, whether a person may be saved in that Church. The charity and moderation our Divines usually express in their answer to this Query, I am sensible hath done our Church some harm; whereas the Roman Priests, being bold in their uncharitableness, and damning all who are out of their communion, make some weak people believe, that they must be in the right, because they are more daring in their asseverations. We have far greater reason to be peremptory in excluding the members of the Church of *Rome* from salvation, than they have to exclude us: For, if that Church be guilty of idolatry (as I see your Divines find it a very hard task to answer the arguments of our learned men, that prove it)

it) those who are guilty of this crime, may soon be resolved by the Apostle, what their lot is like to be in another world; for, *No idolater*, saith *St Paul*, meaning one who lives and dies so, *shall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Yet we are modest; and, whatever the principles of that Church may lead men to, we hope there may be many in that Church, who, either while they live in the communion of that Church, have an aversion to the dangerous and idolatrous practices of it, or, sometimes before they die, do heartily repent of the absurd and unreasonable doctrines and worship they have too long asserted, and complied with; and of such we cannot but entertain a very favourable opinion: And indeed, I could name you some very famous men, both in *France* and *Italy*, who, though they have continued in the communion of that Church, *i. e.* have not joined themselves to any particular publick Protestant Church, yet have not approved of such things in the Roman Church as manifestly obstruct mens salvation; and though, like *Nicodemus*, they have not dared openly to avow their dislike of such errors, for fear of danger, yet in their hearts they have abhorred them, and declared so much to their friends and intimate acquaintance. And though their seeming communion with a Church so erroneous cannot be totally excused, because it looks like a tacit approbation of her errors; yet, since we read of *Joseph*, that he was a disciple of Christ secretly, and, notwithstanding his not confessing Christ publicly, accepted of God; we hope such mens continuing in the external communion of the Roman Church is not a wilful error, but rather a pardonable infirmity, a timorousness which hath nothing of malice in it, and therefore, will not hinder them from salvation. We know not what mercy God may shew to many poor people in that Church, who are invincibly ignorant, and never saw a Bible, from whence they might rectify their mistakes, and do live honestly in this present world: But we must withal confess,

that *the servant who hath known his master's will, and hath not done it, shall be beaten with many stripes*; and whether those who have been enlightened in our Church, and have tasted the good word of God, and cannot but see our agreement with the Gospel, and after all this embrace the errors of the Roman Church, whether these will be excusable at the last day, we justly doubt of. To live in great errors, is to live in sin; but where that living in errors is joined with resistance of great light and knowledge, there the sin becomes all crimson, which was but of a faint red before: And if this be the character of Christ's friends, to do whatsoever he commands us; then the inference is very easy, That those cannot be Christ's friends, nor reign with him in heaven, who wilfully leave undone what they know he hath commanded, and set up a new worship which he hath no where commanded.

Madam, Had you never seen such a thing as the Scripture, your going over to that Church might have deserved some apology: but when you were surrounded with the beams of that *light which shines in darkness*, as *St Peter* calls the Word; with all those rays about you to shut your eyes, and desperately to venture upon the Church which enjoins men to live against some of God's laws, as against *Exod. xx. 5, 6.* and *Matth. xxvi. 27, &c.* and consequently obliges them to prepare for God's displeasure; this, I confess, is an action, which, as it favours of great wilfulness, so I question, if you die in it without serious repentance, whether the joys you hope for will ever fall to your share. If your Churchmen do mean honestly, and do truly aim at the peace of christendom, and in good earnest desire the union of men who profess the name of Christ, why will not they part with those doctrines which are so great an offence, not only to all Protestants, but to Jews and Mahometans too? If that worshipping of Saints and Angels be not necessary, but only useful, Why will they not quit that worship, which, by their own pretences, is needless, especially

especially when they might do much good by it? If the Cup was formerly given to the laity, why will not they, to effect the aforesaid union, restore it to the laity? If the substance of the Sacrament, and the comfort arising from it, may remain entire, without obliging men to believe a Transubstantiation, or Adoration of the consecrated Wafer; Why will not they, for peace sake, lay aside such doctrines, which neither themselves nor any creature understands? If Heaven and Hell are sufficient motives to a holy Life, why will not they, for quietness sake, renounce their doctrine of Purgatory, which, by their own confession, hath no ground in Scripture?

Madam, I have that charitable opinion of you, that if you had but taken a view of the worship of the Church of *Rome*, as it is practised beyond sea, in places where there is no fear of contradiction from any hereticks, where they may freely and securely act according to their principles, had you seen the mode of worshipping the Virgin *Mary* at *Rome*, or in *Spain*, or *Italy*, the sight of it would have certainly discouraged you from embracing that Religion, which now you seem to be mainly delighted with: for indeed the Religion of the Church of *Rome* at this time, if a man were to guess from that which hath the greatest outward veneration, is little else than a worship of the Virgin *Mary*. The very beggars beyond sea, in begging of alms, beg more for the Virgin *Mary*'s sake than for Christ's sake. This, *Madam*, I know to be true, who am no stranger to foreign parts; and I will assure you, that in those cities or towns where both Papists and Protestants have the free exercise of their Religion, you shall live twenty years in a town, before you hear that any Protestant is turned Papist (so few charms are there in the exercise of their Religion beyond sea) but you shall not be above a year or two in such a town, before you hear that several Papists are turned Protestants (such a force has Truth.) The Religion of the Church of *Rome*, as it is practised in

England,

England, looks harmless: Now and then, upon some great Festival, they shew you a Picture of the Virgin *Mary*, or of some other Saint; and the honest Priest qualifies every doctrine, makes the errors soft and plausible; and they dare not, living in a Protestant country, serve the Host of Heaven, I mean Saints and Angels, with all their appurtenances, as they do in places where there are no Protestants to watch them.

Here their Religion seems to be without a sting, and is clad in the fleece of sheep; but if you could but make a voyage into *Spain* or *Italy*, I doubt not but you would see the venom of it, and avoid it: and the only way not to be of the Church of *Rome*, would be to go to *Rome*, provided you did not go without your Bible. In good truth, that Church hath turned Christianity into a mere outward pomp and splendor, which ravishes the eye, but can never content a man's reason. The glistening Gold in their Temples, the curious Images of Saints and Angels, the numerous and stately Altars, the mighty silver Statues, the rich and glorious Vestments you see up and down in their Churches, strike the senses into a kind of extasy; and it must be sense only; for a considerate mind, that searches the inside of things as well as the outside, cannot be so easily gulled and deceived: And this outward pomp they make not the least sign of the truth of their Church; not remembring, that if this be a good sign, the idolatrous people of *Japan* and *China*, whose Temples are infinitely more shining and glorious, will have a better title to the true Church than they. I must confess, that in policy, and worldly craft and cunning, the Church of *Rome* exceeds ours: for they have not only turned the spiritual Worship of the Gospel into a sensual service, into outward religious formalities, a thing strangely pleasing to flesh and blood; but they have shoes that will fit all sorts of feet, great and small, and have remedies for all distempers, and you may go to Heaven in that Church either through the straight way or through the broad, which you please;

please: They can fit the melancholy person and the jovial; they have Monasteries, and Nunneries, and Severities to content the one, and know how to allow greater liberty to the other; they can either send a man to Happiness through a tedious task of mortification, if he likes that method best, or help him thither by a quicker dispatch, by Confession, Attrition, and Absolution upon a Death-bed, when the man can hold sin and the world no longer: Live or die, you cannot do amiss in that Church: for, living you may be forgiven, and after death you may be prayed out of Purgatory, sooner or later, according as you will spend money upon Masses; for gold doth strangely quicken these supplications.

Such a Church, Madam, you have espoused; and divorced yourself from one, that prefers the wisdom of God, and of the Gospel, before the wisdom of the flesh, and glories in dealing plainly and honestly with all men; that keeps close to the Scriptures, and yet is not against those pious customs of Antiquity which are not contradictory to the Scriptures; that generously maintains the prerogative of God, and gives no other honour to Saints and Angels, but what may consist with the glory of her Creator; that hath made no new articles of faith, but keeps to the old, and thinks it rebellion against God, to enjoin things as necessary to salvation, which God never made so; that urges the strictest life, and encourages nothing but what may promote true piety and devotion; that hath no more ceremonies but what are decent, and labours to free religion at once from slovenliness and superstition; that secures the right of sovereign Princes, and teaches her children to live like good Subjects and good Christians; and though it be her misfortune, that too many of her pretended members live like enemies to christianity, yet that is not owing to her doctrines and constitutions, but to the stubbornness of men, who will not be reformed by her precepts. As no man blames Christ or his Apostles, because

Judas

Judas was a hypocrite, or because *Simon Magus* professed their religion; so they betray great ignorance and simplicity, who, for the monstrous impieties of many who profess themselves members of our Assemblies, despise and slight our Church, which in her Principles is most averse from all such practices: A Church, which, as for mine own particular, I have deliberately and premeditatedly embraced and chosen; so, I hope, I shall never be so much forsaken of God, or of my reason, as to quit it to become a Papist. I have not been altogether a careless observer of the several christian Churches dispersed through the world. Desire of mine own salvation hath made me take particular notice, what corruption there is in them, and what affinity they have with the primitive professors of christianity: And I must freely confess, upon a serious examination of the Scripture, and the Fathers of the three first centuries after Christ, that from my heart, I think there is no Church this day, in all the christian world, be it eastern or western, that in her principles and constitutions bears so much of the image of the truly primitive Church, or comes so near it, as the Church of *England*: A Church, which, as your Forefathers had courage to burn for, so I verily believe, that he understands not her innocent designs, and excellent rules, who dares not die a Martyr in her cause. Once more,

Your faithful Friend to serve You,

A. HORNECK.

F I N I S.



us pro-
orance
ties of
Assem-
in her
ces: A
I have
hosen;
f God,
ist. I
the se-
world,
ke par-
n, and
bessors
upon a
Fathers
om my
all the
in her
image
near it,
ch, as
verily
designs,
in her